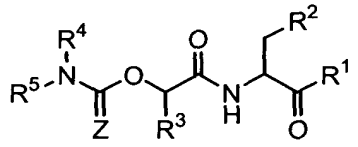
Abstract

This invention provides caspase inhibitors of formula **I**:



I

wherein Z is oxygen or sulfur; R^1 is hydrogen, $-CHN_2$, R, CH_2OR, CH_2SR, or $-CH_2Y$; Y is an electronegative leaving group; R^2 is CO_2H, CH_2CO_2H, or esters, amides or isosteres thereof; R^3 is a group capable of fitting into the S2 subsite of a caspase enzyme; R^4 and R^5 are taken together with the intervening nitrogen to form heterocyclic ring and R is as described in the specification. The compounds are effective inhibitors of apoptosis and IL-1β secretion.